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Slow Sex: Moving Toward Informed Pleasure

by Ann J. Simonton

It isn't just fast food that reminds us fast is not always better. The frantic pace of everyday life seems to impede our ability to make changes that are increasingly necessary for a sustainable future. Many have begun to realize that a primary step toward positive social change is to slow down. Cutting edge groups like Canada's Adbusters have been promoting [Slow Week](#) to encourage SLOW as means to enjoy and prioritize all aspects of life.

Add to that the explosive popularity of the [Slow Food Movement](#). It gently reminds us that by slowing down we can truly savor and honor the celebration of the harvest, the smells and joy of sharing and preparing food with a like-minded community that challenges the Super-Size-Me dogma. Slow Food advocates may delight in the diverse aromatics of flavor saturation; a crisp texture alongside a rich tangy cream, a salty hot flavor next to a cool sour drink. Equally important is their praise of locally grown produce pulled from the earth by unexploited labor. Every aspect of food is understood because they choose to slow down enough to find out its provenance.

Snails Unite

So, with this same gustatory excitement, let's start a Slow Sex Movement. Using the slow food movement's template and their snail icon-who happens conveniently to display an extraordinarily elaborate sexual dance to inch us forward-slowly. Slow Sex expresses a progressive and more humane view of sexuality. Membership is open and would include people of all sexual orientations.

The slow food movement, for example, in no way vilifies those who eat at Taco Bell. It merely wants more transparency around the whole process it takes to bring fast food to the consumer and to exemplify another way to eat. Just as using sustainable practices for growing healthy food nurture the earth, Slow Sex would not deplete but nurture the individual. If sex is to be sustainable one would seek to build lasting relationships with other humans just as the food movement does with the land and soil. Relations would be cultivated over time rather than on a "mere grab and go" basis.

Fast sex is often cold, impersonal and can leave one feeling empty, angry or both. Slowing sex emphasizes the human connection rather than the mere surface, quickie sensations. Slow Sex is hot, engaging, satisfying and celebratory. It could promote passionate kissing, foreplay for all, hand holding and deep [soul gazing](#) all of which could increase intimacy.

Sex Outside the Box

We all have the right to explore sexuality without the shackles of repression, violence, homophobia and capitalism (to name a few). Sexuality is an indisputable force that can be a healing balm or a needed refuge in an often cruel world. Sexual connection can allow us at times to express our authentic selves. Body hatred has sadly forced many to believe they don't deserve wonderful sex. Slow Sex would be an opportunity to love and honor the beauty in every human body.

The media landscape is clearly bloated with highly processed sex. High in fat content-in terms of the lies it tells. High in calories-in terms of the burden it places on the possibility of real intimacy. It does not celebrate the beauty of imperfection, the vulnerability of tenderness and shared experience. It hasn't time for, or interest in empathic communication about respective desires and boundaries. At best it sets people up for misunderstanding and disappointment-at worst for rape and abuse.

Schools teach youth abstinence-only, which is known not to reduce STDs or pregnancy, while the media simultaneously shoves pornographic images onto our youth long before they have even considered engaging in sexual intercourse. Our culture promotes the idea that young "beautiful" females who spread in Playboy or strip their way through college represent empowered, enviable role models. Men and boys experience a separate difficulty. In [Men and Sex](#), author Ron Levant defines nonrelational sex as being rooted within a normal North American male upbringing. This rearing discourages any emotional display, equates emotional intimacy with a loss of autonomy and sexual desire is experienced primarily as lust with no requirements for intimacy or emotional attachment. It is, Levant states, "a narcissistic way of experiencing sexuality, exemplified by a sometimes startling lack of empathy." Slow Sex could offer a model of a more intimate and engaged sexuality that confronts the fundamental ways in which culture defines masculinity and femininity.

Slow Sex celebrates the idea that no one should be forced to choose between just two available gender boxes. The intersexual snail icon with its ambiguous genitalia could lead the way. Progressives wanting to challenge the constraints of a restrictive gender binary system could use Slow Sex to promote gender less not gender more. Who decided everyone must check their genitals before choosing a partner, playing a sport, running for office or expressing an emotion? After all, humans exist within a broad range of [chromosomal possibilities](#). The Slow Sex movement would honor this diverse range and help dispel the myth of binary madness.

Pornified World

Pornography and prostitution represent the quintessence of fast nonrelational sex. As our pornified world is saturated with [cybersex](#), [teledildonics](#), frighteningly realistic [sex dolls](#) that will soon come equipped with [robotic interiors](#), few viable alternatives are offered. Technology will never run out of ideas on how to market a faster orgasm-but what if we slowed down to a point of refusing to buy it? Slow sex can be a sex positive alternative for those wanting to explore sexuality outside the tired clichés rampant in the current sex industry, which if you hadn't noticed, caters primarily to a pimp's version of what men's sexual pleasure must look like.

Many already understand that the contemporary sex-industrial-complex isn't interested in exploring the range of sexual expression-it's interested in profit. Are we all for sale, to some degree, in the sexual marketplace, tainted by the economic system we live in? Can we learn to separate our sexuality from a devouring market that auctions every angle of it? Capitalism, Free Markets and Democracy are far from being synonymous terms and many are beginning to understand [this](#) and are attempting to disengage.

A Slow Sex movement could meticulously document educational facts and open vital debates that our sexually repressed nation seems to shy away from. As a global community where many work toward human rights and justice for all, people of conscience will stand by the need to make detailed investigations into the sex industry providing more transparency for everyone. Imagine the day when violent pornography is available but rejected because the populace understands every bit of minutiae involved in its creation and distribution.

Endless Sex War?

Slow Sex is about reframing the contentious sex war arguments as a public health issue. Arguing about whether consenting adults have the right to do this or look at that to get off, goes nowhere. Imagine, if we were still stuck on this argument over the use of cigarettes? Of course people have a right to smoke, but

we all have the right to know the exact detailed health effects of smoking and consequences of living and working around smokers. Public health has successfully used strong health education programs making treatment widely available and reducing the number of addicted adult smokers by half.

Slow sex is not a condemnatory movement, but a movement toward informed pleasure. It isn't about forcing change but about providing a fair and reasoned platform to address difficult questions about how the culture promotes sexual intimacy, with the caveat to do no harm. Consider the brave words of John Stuart Mill from, *On Liberty*: *"The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."*

This topic reminds me of the final lines of Sharon Old's poem, "The Connoisseuse of Slugs:"

*"... What I liked
was to draw aside the ivy, breathe the
odor of the wall, and stand there in silence
until the slug forgot I was there
and sent its antennae up out of its
head, the glimmering umber horns
rising like telescopes, until finally the
sensitive knobs would pop out the ends,
delicate and intimate. Years later,
when I first saw a naked man,
I gasped with pleasure to see that quiet
mystery reenacted, the slow
elegant being coming out of hiding and
gleaming in the dark air, eager and so
trusting you could weep."*

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